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Security Council

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Note by the President of the Security Council

A letter dated 24 October 2000, addressed to the President of the Security Council, was handed to the President by Bernard Grandjean, President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, on 28 November 2000. It is hereby circulated for the attention of the members of the Council (see annex).

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Annex

Letter dated 24 October 2000 from the President of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System and the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations

On behalf of the global staff of the United Nations system represented by the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA), and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), we have the honour to transmit to you a petition on the safety and security of United Nations staff, signed by over 12,000 staff members. Through their signatures, the staff express their desire for the Security Council to convene a special meeting of the Council for the purpose of addressing safety and security problems faced by United Nations staff and associated personnel, especially when on mission assignments.

Since September 1999 alone, 84 civilian and military personnel have been killed and on average two major incidents involving rape, physical assault, theft and other violations of individual rights have been reported each day.

We all decried the most recent tragic incidents in West Timor and Guinea, involving the killing of four colleagues from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as unacceptable and the worldwide marches in solidarity with our slain colleagues was testimony to our outrage. We were gratified that the Security Council, by its resolution 1319 (2000) condemned this outrageous and contemptible act against unarmed international staff who were in West Timor to help the refugees and reiterated its condemnation of the murder of two peacekeepers of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor and attacks on the United Nations presence in East Timor. Barely a few days later, a riot involving West Timor militia members almost led to further casualties involving other UNHCR colleagues. We are convinced that comprehensive mission planning, a more effective early warning system and preventive measures, as supported by the Security Council declaration on the occasion of the Millennium Summit, would go a long way to address and contain such dangers more effectively. This is why we are concerned that an acute shortage of funds and resources hinders the implementation of practical measures, which have widely been recognized as essential to bolster staff security. The limited acceptance and adherence to international legal instruments and conventions by many States, especially those where security transgressions occur, add to the complexities in addressing this multidimensional issue effectively.

In that context, the staff are fully aware of the concerns of the Security Council as reflected in its various resolutions and express their appreciation to Council members for their support for staff safety and security.

In the light of the foregoing, the staff of the common system of the United Nations suggest that the Security Council convene a meeting that is especially dedicated to this issue. In such a meeting, the Security Council may wish to draw upon the various initiatives of the Secretary-General, which we fully support, and invite the staff representatives to present their perspectives and suggestions for further practical measures.

(*Signed*) Mehri **Madarshahi**
President, CCISUA

(*Signed*) Bernard **Grandjean**
President, FICSA

Appendix

Petition to the members of the Security Council

(Sponsored by the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA))

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned Staff of the United Nations system, unite globally to strongly urge the members of the Security Council to hold a special session on staff safety and security to address the prevailing problems faced by United Nations staff and associated personnel while in the line of duty.

Over 200 civilian staff members have been killed and 228 taken hostage or kidnapped in the past eight years. Moreover, in the same period, there have been nearly 300 reported violent incidents against United Nations staff, including violent robbery, physical assault and rape.

With the most recent incident in West Timor, where three staff members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were killed and scores were injured, this unacceptable trend has continued at an alarming pace. It is our conviction that this tragedy could have been avoided if a more effective early warning system had been in place and preventive measures, including support from the host Government, had been provided in a timely manner. The lack of sustainable financial resources to deal effectively with this multidimensional issue is an important element of this predicament. The commitment of our Member States to the safety and security of the international civil service is essential. To that effect, a whole series of practical measures are required to translate these commitments into reality, if we are to continue to fulfil our mandate.

The staff of the United Nations system are deeply distressed that preventive and preparatory measures for staff safety and security have not become an integral part of the peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. This important issue should form part of the special session of the Security Council, in which staff representatives should be invited to participate.

[12,000 signatures follow]